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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 KAMPALA 000679

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TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM MOPS MARR UG CG SU
SUBJECT: UGANDA/DRC: OPERATION RUDIA II UPDATE (JUNE 29,
2009)

REF: KAMPALA 595

Classified By: P/E Chief Kathleen FitzGibbon for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).).

¶1. (SBU) Summary: This cable is a periodic update on the regional military operation against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) known as Operation Rudia II. This report is not meant to provide an overarching narrative or polished analysis of the operation, but rather offers spot information gleaned in Uganda only, from credible U.S. Mission sources here. We recognize the regional scope of the operation and the fact that our sources may be limited in their knowledge and perspective on Rudia II. End Summary.

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MILITARY UPDATE
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¶2. (S NF) Military operations against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) continue to make progress. Between June 15 and 29, the Ugandan Peoples Defense Forces (UPDF) killed four and captured six LRA fighters and rescued 26 abductees. (Note: Other information sources suggest the numbers of LRA killed and captured may be higher. End Note.) Ugandan Defense Minister Crispus Kiyonga estimates that 50% of the LRA's senior leadership and 25% of its fighting force have been killed during the military operations. Kiyonga puts the number of remaining LRA fighters at 300. The U.N. Mission in Congo (MONUC) provides similar figures, estimating that the LRA's fighting force currently numbers 300-400 and its abductees number 600-1,000. (Note: We believe MONUC's numbers of abductees in captivity is high. End Note.) Recent reports show that LRA leader Joseph Kony is moving toward Bokoya, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in line with earlier reports that LRA leadership was believed to be moving west towards the Central African Republic (CAR) border. Meanwhile, his deputy, Okot Odhiambo, continues to make moves to divert attention away from Kony's group. MONUC also reports an emerging trend among Congolese youth imitating LRA tactics and generating false reports of "LRA activities" and attacks on civilians.

¶3. (C) Ambassador Browning attended a "Friends of MONUC" meeting on June 22. MONUC briefed the group on the Chiefs of Defense Forces (CHOD) meeting in Kisangani. The CHODs from DRC, Uganda, and CAR agreed that military operations are putting pressure on the LRA and should continue. MONUC discussed its ability to provide logistical support to CAR and/or Uganda should its area of operations expand, but says it would need a new mandate from the U.N. Security Council to do so. Notably, MONUC did not mention the possibility of expanding operations into southern Sudan. (Note: Our sources speculate that this is because the LRA does not seem to be moving towards southern Sudan. End Note.) The meeting's participants noted that there also seems to be confusion regarding recent rumors of LRA activity in southern Sudan and

possible Khartoum support for these activities spurred by comments from a southern Sudanese politician from Western Equatoria Province that appeared in the Ugandan press. The group recognized that these rumors are unconfirmed and cautioned operators in the region to exercise restraint in perpetuating such rumors.

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POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT
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¶4. (C) The Government of Uganda formally charged MEGA FM journalist Patrick Otim and eleven others with treason for their association with the Peoples Patriotic Front, a nascent rebel group in northern Uganda (ref A). The Government has not and does not intend to make any further arrests, despite the fears of opposition politicians that they will be implicated and detained for political purposes.

¶5. (S NF) UPDF Spokesman Felix Kulayigye told P/E Chief on June 25 that Kenyan Prime Minister Raila Odinga may be making common cause with the Acholi opposition in Uganda and diaspora elements in Nairobi to advocate on behalf of LRA leader Joseph Kony. Odinga reportedly has written a letter to U.S. President Barack Obama requesting that the U.S. stop its operations against the LRA. Odinga, an ethnic Luo, reportedly is attempting to unite the Luo-speaking communities of western Kenya, southern Sudan, and northern Uganda. (Note: The Acholi people in northern Uganda are Luo speakers. The majority of elected parliamentarians in the Acholi sub-region are members of the opposition. End Note.) Kulayigye said the Government suspects Odinga of supporting

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the Ugandan opposition because President Museveni supported Kenyan President Kibaki during the Kenyan elections. Ugandan Government sources allege that Odinga met with Government of Southern Sudan President Salva Kiir and Vice President Riek Machar with a similar request. (Note: We do not know how Kiir responded. End Note.)

¶6. (SBU) U.N. Special Envoy for LRA-Affected Areas Joachim Chissano's contract ends on June 30. He postponed his final report to the U.N. Security Council until July 15. LRA chief negotiator David Matsanga grabbed the opportunity to claim in the press that he persuaded Chissano to delay the report. Matsanga's claims are "a lie," according to Nuno Tomas, the head of Chissano's office in Kampala. Chissano had other commitments in Madagascar and could not travel to New York until mid-July.

¶7. (U) In a significant diplomatic development, the newly accredited Congolese Ambassador, Charles Okoto Lola Kombe, arrived in Kampala on June 24, 2009. Kombe's arrival upgrades DRC's representation to the ambassadorial level and is the culmination of three year's of regional diplomatic efforts through the Tripartite Plus process and bilateral discussions between the two countries to normalize relations. The move is expected to strengthen Ugandan-Congolese cooperation. Kampala has nominated and is awaiting approval for its new ambassador to Kinshasa.

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HUMANITARIAN SITUATION
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¶8. (S NF) The World Food Program (WFP) is now coordinating its food drops in LRA areas with MONUC and UPDF forces from Dungu, according to MONUC sources.

BROWNING